

5. Public Streetscapes

San Antonio has the opportunity to reinforce Houston Street as a distinct shopping and entertainment environment: a pedestrian precinct, one where people walking share the downtown with automobiles and public transportation. This mix of traffic can provide a sense of excitement and can actually enhance the pedestrians experience if these other elements are kept in balance. Paramount, however, should be providing a sense of comfort for pedestrians. This includes ensuring that the sidewalks are designed to facilitate walking and that public spaces are created which are lively and inviting.

Many of these principles are set forth in the San Antonio Downtown Triparty Transportation Improvements Plan. This plan forms the foundation for streetscape improvements and all improvements should be compatible with this plan. This chapter includes guidelines for Houston Street streetscape elements.



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Design Objectives Underlying the Streetscape Design Guidelines

The basic objectives are outlined in the Triparty Plan and form the basis for streetscape design on Houston Street. This plan contains a number of objectives that apply to Houston Street:

- *To develop a network of attractive “front-door” streets that supports a lively street environment.*
- *To integrate, at appropriate locations, the Riverwalk with the street environment.*
- *The design for street elements and streetscape should respect the character and traditional use of downtown San Antonio, they should also be seen as setting the stage for revitalization of activity and future change.*
- *To create a streetscape theme that promotes diverse urban, pedestrian activities during the daytime and evenings.*
- *To provide areas of softer texture as a contrast to the predominantly hard surface and high glare of the area.*
- *To provide a sense of security which encourages pedestrian use into the evening hours.*
- *To provide a sense of direction for pedestrians on Houston Street to the Riverwalk and other important linkages to areas downtown.*



Appropriate. Design public spaces that are lively and inviting.

Sidewalk Design

Sidewalks should help to establish a sense of visual continuity for the area and to enhance the walking experience.

Decorative Paving

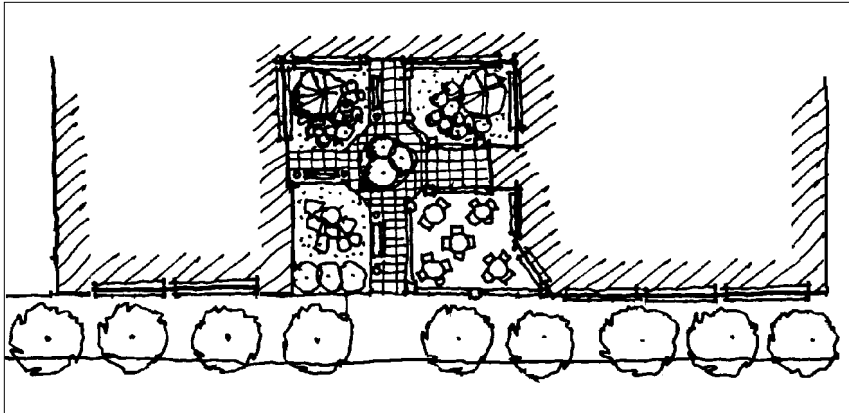
5.1 Use a consistent decorative paving design to convey a sense of visual continuity.

- Decorative paving should be used to denote distinct activity zones, such as intersections, pedestrian crossings and building entrances, and to define places for sitting and other outdoor activities.

Sidewalk Plazas

5.2 Coordinate private open space development with that of the streetscape design of public sidewalks, when conditions permit.

- For example, combine a private courtyard with an expanded sidewalk plaza to maximize the visual impacts of these spaces.



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Public Open Space

Opportunities exist to create outdoor places for people within properties, in addition to “plazas” that may be developed in expanded areas of the sidewalks. These spaces may include gardens and courtyards as part of building entries and they may also include more formal, public open spaces. In all cases, these should be designed to maximize the potential for their active use and to enhance the traditional character of the area.

5.3 Open spaces should read as “accents” in the street wall of building fronts.

- In general, the majority of the edge of a block should consist of building walls. Gaps in the street wall that occur as open space should be planned to be subordinate to the definition of the street edge with buildings.

5.4 Define the edges of the open space along the sidewalk.

- Use changes in paving, hedges and walls to define the street edge.

5.5 Frame public open space activities that will be in use year round.

- To help to animate public open space, locate it such that pedestrian circulation routes to major buildings cross it.
- Orient major building entrances onto the open space and design circulation routes to facilitate movement through it.

5.6 Site open space to maximize opportunities for sun and shade.

- Provide shade for summer months and sun in the winter, when feasible.

Street Furniture

Several areas of the downtown already have amenities in place that enhance the pedestrian experience. Additional furnishings should be considered to enhance the area, but should work with the existing features and the hierarchy of streetscape improvements proposed in the *San Antonio Downtown Triparty Transportation Improvement Plan*.

5.7 All street furniture in the public right-of-way should have similar materials and colors.

- Street furniture should be compatible with the existing furnishings.
- Individual furnishings should be of designs that may be combined with other street furniture in a coherent components.
- Furnishings outside of the public right-of-way (e.g.) within a private courtyard, may be different from existing street furniture.



Street furniture should be compatible with the existing furnishings.

Street Furniture Arrangement

5.8 Street furniture should be located in areas of high pedestrian activity.

- Locate furniture at pedestrian route intersections and major building entrances and near outdoor gathering places.

5.9 Street furnishings should be clustered in “groupings,” when feasible.

- Use planters and waste receptacles to frame spaces for benches, for example.

Seating

5.10 Public seating should be provided to enhance the pedestrian experience.

- Install benches in high pedestrian traffic areas and/or areas of interest.
- The design of the benches should be consistent with other furnishings.

5.11 Position a bench to provide a sense of comfort.

- Locate a bench perpendicular to the street edge, when feasible.
- Avoid locating a bench close to the curb.
- Buffer the bench from traffic; for example, position a planter between the bench and the curb.

Outdoor Dining Seating

5.12 Outdoor dining areas should not hinder vehicular or pedestrian circulation.

- The width of a sidewalk path shall remain unobstructed for a minimum of 6 feet.
- Dining areas shall be set back from the street curb a minimum of 3 feet.
- These areas should not impede pedestrian traffic to adjoining merchants.

5.13 Outdoor dining area furnishings should complement the existing streetscape furnishings.

- The design of the furnishings should be consistent with other streetscape furnishings.

5.14 Barriers may be considered to separate pedestrian and dining activities.

- Planters, rails, and chains with bollards are appropriate elements to be considered.
- These barriers should be moveable.



Outdoor dining areas should not hinder vehicular or pedestrian circulation.

Waste receptacles

5.15 Cluster waste receptacles with other furnishings.

- The design of the receptacles should be compatible with other existing furnishings.

Planters

5.16 When feasible, cluster planters with other furnishings.

- The design of planters should be compatible with other furnishings.
- Install freestanding planters at seating areas, along edges of parking lots, in pedestrian plazas and in clustered furnishing areas.
- Private planters may be used to help define primary building entrances and should also be compatible with the building materials.



The design of planters should be compatible with other furnishings.

Landscaping and Planting

5.17 Use indigenous plant materials, when feasible.

- Locate street trees along edges of sidewalks, maintaining a clearly-defined pedestrian travel zone.
- Locate street trees in larger planting areas, such as buffer strips adjacent to parking lots and/or pocket parks.
- Provide underground irrigation systems.
- Use flowers to provide seasonal colors.

Street Lights

5.18 Light pole designs should complement other street furniture.

- The color of the pole should match that of other key street furnishings, including benches and waste receptacles.

5.19 The light pole, or standard, should be designed to accommodate special decorative accessories.

- Mounts for hanging planter baskets and banners, for example, should be included.
- Mounts for seasonal lighting schemes also should be considered.

Public Art

Public art should enhance the pedestrian experience along Houston Street. Public art should be installed in strategic locations along Houston Street; for example, public art at gateways, bridge crossings, small plazas and view termini is appropriate. Installations may be designed as integral components of the existing streetscape.

5.20 The use of public art is encouraged.

- Consider locations such as gateways, bridge crossings, small plazas and view termini.
- Art that is developed as an integral part of the architecture or streetscape is also encouraged.



The use of public art is encouraged.